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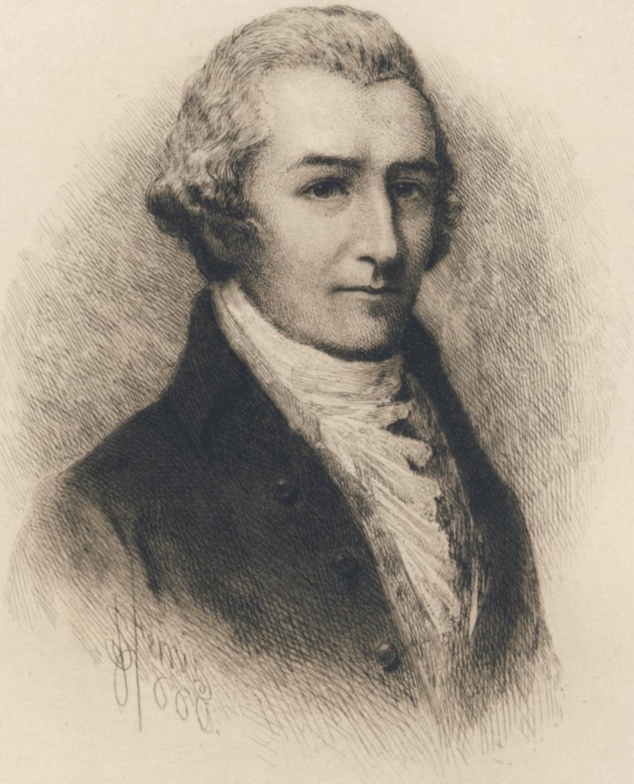

COLONEL WILLIAM BRADFORD.

THE PATRIOT PRINTER OF '76.

DIED SEPTEMBER 25TH 1791.
AGED 72 YEARS.

From a Miniature in possession of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

THE

PENNSYLVANIA MAGAZINE

OF

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HOW THE LANDING OF TEA WAS OPPOSED IN PHILADELPHIA BY COLONEL WILLIAM BRADFORD AND OTHERS IN 1773.

CONTRIBUTED BY FREDERICK D. STONE.

Every school-boy is taught the particulars of the destruction of tea in Boston Harbor on December the 16th, 1773, but there are few people, we believe, who have had the fact impressed on their minds that the opposition to the Tea Act began in Philadelphia. Historians have not failed to recognize this, but the violent measures to which the citizens of Boston were driven to prevent the landing of the tea have caused the beginning of the opposition to be overlooked, as well as the firm resistance that the importation of the obnoxious article met with in other parts of the country.

When the late John William Wallace was writing the life of his ancestor, Colonel William Bradford, he told me that though he could not find sufficient evidence to warrant the statement, he felt convinced that the opposition to the Tea Act in Philadelphia centred around Bradford's Coffee

House, and that Colonel Bradford was as active in resisting that measure as he had been in opposing the Stamp Act.

Unfortunately, Mr. Wallace never met with the following article, which appeared in the *Pennsylvania Mercury* of October 1, 1791, headed—

"ANECDOTE OF THE LATE WILLIAM BRADFORD.

"After the Tax on Tea imported into America was reduced to 3d. per pound by the British Parliament, there appeared to be a general disposition in the Colonies to pay it. In this critical situation of the Liberties of America, Mr. Bradford stopped two or three citizens of Philadelphia, who were walking by the door of his house in Front-street, and stated to them the danger to which our country was exposed, by receiving, and paying the tax on, the tea. Many difficulties stared the gentlemen, to whom he spoke, in the face, in setting on foot an opposition to the landing of the dutied tea which was expected from London; and it was particularly mentioned that the citizens of Philadelphia were tired out with town and committee meetings, and that it would be impossible to collect a sufficient number of them together, to make an opposition to the tea, respectable and formidable. 'Leave that business to me (said Mr. Bradford),—I'll collect a town meeting for you—Prepare some resolves;—and,—they shall be executed.' The next evening he collected a few of such citizens as he knew were heartily opposed to the usurpations of the British Parliament, who drew up some spirited resolutions to reject the dutied tea, and to send back the tea ship. These resolutions were adopted the Saturday[1] following, by a large and respectable town meeting, at which the late Dr. Thomas Cadwalader (a decided Whig) presided. The same resolutions were immediately afterwards adopted, nearly word for word, by a town meeting in Boston,[2] where a disposition to receive the tea had become general, from an idea that an opposition to it would not be seconded or supported by any of the other colonies. The events which followed the adoption of these resolutions in the town of Boston are well known. However great the merit and sufferings of that town were in the beginning of the war, it is a singular fact, and well worthy of record in the history of the events which produced the American revolution, that the FIRST act in that great business originated in PHILADELPHIA, and that the FIRST scene in it originated with Mr. William Bradford."

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[1] October 16, 1773.

[2] November 5, 1773.

A more detailed account of the opposition was printed in the *Pennsylvania Packet* of January 3, 1774; and although it has appeared in print more than once since then, its importance warrants its preservation in a more permanent place than any which has yet been accorded to it.

"The unanimity, spirit and zeal, which have heretofore animated all the colonies, from Boston to South Carolina, have been so eminently displayed in the opposition to the pernicious project of the East India Company, in sending Tea to America, while it remains subject to a duty, and the Americans at the same time confined by the strongest prohibitory laws to import it only from Great Britain, that a particular account of the transactions of this city cannot but be acceptable to all our readers, and every other friend of American liberty.

"Upon the first advice of this measure, a general dissatisfaction was expressed, that, at a time when we were struggling with this oppressive act, and an agreement subsisting not to import Tea while subject to the duty, our fellow-subjects in England should form a measure so directly tending to enforce the act and again embroil us with our parent state. When it was also considered that the proposed mode of disposing of the Tea tended to a monopoly, ever odious in a free country, a universal disapprobation shewed itself throughout the city. A public meeting of the inhabitants was held at the State-House on the 18th October,[1] at which great numbers attended, and the sense of the city was expressed in the following resolves:

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[1] This meeting was held on the 16th, and is reported in the papers of the 18th.

"1. That the disposal of their own property is the inherent right of freemen; that there can be no property in that which another can, of right, take from us without our consent; that the claim of Parliament to tax America is, in other words, a claim of right to levy contributions on us at pleasure.

"2. That the duty imposed by Parliament upon Tea landed in America is a tax on the Americans, or levying contributions on them without their consent.

"3. That the express purpose for which the tax is levyed on the Americans, namely for the support of government, administration of justice, and defence of his Majesty's dominions in America, has a direct tendency to render Assemblies useless, and to introduce arbitrary government and slavery.

"4. That a virtuous and steady opposition to this ministerial plan of governing America is absolutely necessary to preserve even the shadow of liberty, and is a duty which every freeman in America owes to his country, to himself, and to his posterity.

"5. That the resolution lately entered into by the East India Company to send out their Tea to America, subject to the payment of duties on its being landed here, is an open attempt to inforce this ministerial plan, and a violent attack upon the liberties of America.

"6. That it is the duty of every American to oppose this attempt.

"7. That whoever shall, directly or indirectly, countenance this attempt, or in any wise aid or abet in unloading, receiving or vending the Tea sent, or to be sent out by the East India Company, while it remains subject to the payment of duty here, is an enemy to his country.

"8. That a Committee be immediately chosen to wait on these gentlemen, who, it is reported, are appointed by the East India Company to receive and sell said Tea, and request them, from a regard to their own character, and the peace and good order of the city and province, immediately to resign their appointment.

"In consequence of this appointment the Committee waited upon the gentlemen in this city, who had been appointed Consignees of the expected cargo. They represented to them the detestation and abhorrence, in which this measure was held by their fellow-citizens, the danger and difficulties which must attend the execution of so odious a trust, and expressed the united desire of the city, that they would renounce the commission, and engage not to intermeddle with the ship or cargo in any shape whatever. Some of the Commissioners resigned, in a manner that gave general satisfaction, others, in such equivocal terms as required further explanation. However in a few days the resignation was complete.[1] In this situation things remained for a few days.

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[1] The consignees who resigned promptly at the request of the committee were Thomas and Isaac Wharton, and the letter-book of this firm, extracts from which have been transcribed for the Historical Society, contains many interesting items regarding the opposition to the Tea Act. One of the most important of these letters has been already given to our readers, and will be found on page 78 of Vol. XIV. of this magazine.

The firm that hesitated was that of James & Drinker, and to them the following card was addressed:

A CARD.

THE PUBLIC present their Compliments to Meſſieurs JAMES and DRINKER. *We* are informed that you have this day received your commiſſion to enſlave your native Country; and as your frivolous Plea of having received no Advice, relative to the ſcandalous Part you were to act, in the Tea-Scheme, can no longer ſerve your purpose, nor divert our Attention, We expect and deſire You will immediately inform the Public, by a Line or two to be left at the Coffee House, Whether you will, or will not, renounce all Pretenſions to execute that Commiſſion? . . . . That we may Govern ourselves accordingly.

Philadelphia, December 2, 1773.

Colonel Etting, in his "History of Independence Hall" (page 70), says that Abel James, the head of the firm of James & Drinker, was waited

In the mean time, the general spirit and indignation rose to such a height that it was thought proper to call another general meeting of the principal citizens, to consider and resolve upon such further steps as might give weight, and insure success to the unanimous opposition now formed. Accordingly a meeting was held for the above purpose, at which a great number of respectable inhabitants attended; and it appeared to be the unanimous opinion that the entry of the ship at the Custom-House, or the landing of any part of her cargo, would be attended with great danger and difficulty, and would directly tend to destroy that peace and good order which ought to be preserved. An addition of twelve other gentlemen was then made to the former Committee, and the general meeting adjourned till the arrival of the Tea ship. Information being given of that, the price of Tea was suddenly advanced, though this was owing to a general scarcity of that article, yet all the possessors of Tea, in order to give strength to the opposition, readily agreed to reduce the price, and sell what remained in their hands at a reasonable rate. Nothing now remained, but to keep up a proper correspondence and connection with the other colonies, and to take all prudent and proper precautions on the arrival of the Tea ship.

"It is not easy to describe the anxiety and suspense of the City in this interval.[1] Sundry reports of her arrival were received, which proved premature. But on Saturday evening the 25th ulto. an express came up from Chester, to inform the town, that the Tea-ship, commanded by Capt. Ayres, with her detested cargo, was arrived there, having followed another ship up the river so far.

"The Committee met early the next morning, and being

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upon by a crowd of citizens, and, in response to a demand for his resignation then and there made, he gave the guarantee of his word and property that the tea should not be landed, but that the ship should go back to England; then pointing to his young daughter, Rebecca, who stood near him perched on the head of one of her father's hogsheads, he pledged her (*a vivum vadium*) to the fulfilment of his promise.

[1] It was during this season of anxiety that the two hand-bills of which we give reduced fac-similes were issued.

TO THE
Delaware Pilots.

WE took the Pleaſure, ſome Days ſince, of kindly admoniſhing you *to do your Duty*; if perchance you ſhould meet with the *(Tea,)* Ship Polly, Captain Ayres; a Three Decker which is hourly expected.

We have now to add, that Matters ripen faſt here; and that *much is expected from thoſe Lads who meet with the Tea Ship.*----There is ſome Talk of a handsome Reward for the Pilot who gives the first good Account of her.----How that may be, we cannot *for certain* determine: But all agree, that Tar and Feathers will be his Portion, who pilots her into this Harbour. And we will anſwer for ourſelves, that, whoever is committed to us, as an Offender againſt the Rights of *America*, will experience the utmoſt Exertion of our Abilities; as

THE COMMITTEE FOR TARRING AND FEATHERING.

P. S. We expect you will furniſh yourſelves with Copies of the foregoing and following Letter; which are printed for this Purpoſe, that the Pilot who meets with Captain *Ayres* may favor him with a Sight

Committee of Taring and Feathering.

T O
Capt. AYRES,

Of the Ship *POLLY*, on a Voyage from *London* to *Philadelphia*,

SIR,

WE are informed that you have, imprudently, taken Charge of a Quantity of Tea; which has been ſent out by the *India* Company, *under the Auſpices of the Miniſtry*, as a Trial of *American* Virtue and Reſolution.

Now, as your Cargo, on your Arrival here, will moſt aſſuredly bring you into hot water; and as you are perhaps a Stranger *to theſe Parts*, we have concluded to adviſe you of the preſent Situation of Affairs in *Philadelphia*---that, taking Time by the Forelock, you may ſtop ſhort in your dangerous Errand----ſecure your Ship againſt the Rafts of combuſtible Matter which may be ſet on Fire, and turned looſe againſt her; and more than all this, that you may preſerve your own Perſon, from the Pitch and Feathers that are prepared for you.

In the firſt Place, we muſt tell you, that the *Pennſylvanians* are, *to a Man*, paſſionately fond of Freedom; the Birthright of *Americans*; and at all Events are determined to enjoy it

That they ſincerely believe, no Power on the Face of the Earth has a Right to tax them without their Conſent.

That in their Opinion, the Tea in your Cuſtody is deſigned by the Miniſtry to enforce ſuch a Tax, which they will undoubtedly oppoſe; and in ſo doing, give you every poſſible Obſtruction.

We are nominated to a very diſagreeable, but neceſſary Service.- -- To our Care are committed all Offenders againſt the Rights of *America*; and hapleſs is he, whoſe evil Deſtiny has doomed him to ſuffer at our Hands.

You are ſent out on a diabolical Service; and if you are ſo fooliſh and obſtinate as to compleat your Voyage; by bringing your Ship to Anchor in this Port; you may run ſuch a Gauntlet, as will induce you, in your laſt Moments, moſt heartily to curſe thoſe who have made you the Dupe of their Avarice and Ambition.

What think you Captain, of a Halter around your Neck----ten Gallons of liquid Tar decanted on your Pate----with the Feathers of a dozen wild Geeſe laid over that to enliven your Appearance?

Only think ſeriouſly of this----and fly to the Place from whence you came--- fly without Heſitation----vithout the Formality of a Proteſt----and above all, Captain *Ayres* let us adviſe you to fly without the wild Geeſe Feathers.

Your Friends *to ſerve*

Philadelphia, Nov. 27, 1773

THE COMMITTEE *as before ſubſcribed*

TO THE

DELAWARE PILOTS.

THE Regard we have for your Characters, and our Deſire to promote your future Peace and Safety, are the Occaſion of this Third Addreſs to you.

IN our ſecond Letter we acquainted you, that the Tea Ship was a Three Decker; We are now informed by good Authority, ſhe is not a Three Decker, but an *old black Ship, without a Head,* or *any Ornaments.*

THE *Captain* is a *ſhort fat* Fellow, and a little *obſtinate* withal.----So much the worſe for him.----For, ſo ſure as he *rides ruſty*, We ſhall heave him Keel out, and ſee that his Bottom be well fired, ſcrubb'd and paid.----His Upper-Works too, will have an Overhawling----and as it is ſaid, he has a good deal of *Quick Work* about him, We will take particular Care that ſuch Part of him undergoes a thorough Rummaging.

WE have a ſtill *worſe Account* of *his Owner*;---for it is ſaid, the Ship POLLY was bought by him on Purpoſe, to make a Penny of us; and that *he* and Captain *Ayres* were well adviſed of the Riſque they would run, in thus daring to inſult and abuſe us.

Captain Ayres was here in the Time of the Stamp-Act, and ought to have known our People better, than to have expected we would be ſo mean as to ſuffer his *rotten* TEA to be funnel'd down our Throats, with the *Parliament's Duty* mixed with it.

WE know him well, and have calculated to a Gill and a Feather, how much it will require to fit him for an *American Exhibition*. And we hope, not one of your Body will behave ſo ill, as to oblige us to clap him in the Cart along Side of the *Captain*.

WE muſt repeat, that the SHIP POLLY is an *old black Ship*, of about Two Hundred and Fifty Tons burthen, *without a Head*, and *without Ornaments*,----and, that CAPTAIN AYRES is a *thick chunky Fellow*.----------As ſuch, TAKE CARE to AVOID THEM.

YOUR OLD FRIENDS,

THE COMMITTEE FOR TARRING AND FEATHERING.

Philadelphia, December 7, 1773.

apprized of the arrival of Mr. Gilbert Barclay, the other Consignee who came passenger in the ship, they immediately went in a body to request his renunciation of the commission. Mr. Barclay politely attended the Committee, at the first request; and being made acquainted with the sentiments of the city, and to the danger to which the public liberties of America was exposed by this measure, he, after expressing the particular hardship of his situation, also resigned the commission, in a manner which affected every one present.

"The Committee then appointed three of their members to go to Chester, and two others to Gloucester Point, in order to have the earliest opportunity of meeting Capt. Ayres, and representing to him the sense of the public, respecting his voyage and cargo. The gentlemen, who had set out for Chester, receiving intelligence that the vessel had weighed anchor about 12 o'clock and proceeded to town, returned. About 2 o'clock she appeared in sight of Gloucester-point, where a number of inhabitants from the town had assembled with the gentlemen from the Committee. As she passed along, she was hailed, and the Captain requested not to proceed farther, but to come on shore. This the captain complied with, and was landed thro' a lane made by the people, to the gentlemen appointed to confer with him. They represented to him the general sentiments, together with the danger and difficulties that would attend his refusal to comply with the wishes of the inhabitants; and finally desired him to proceed with them to town, where he would be more fully informed of the temper and resolution of the people. He was accordingly accompanied to town, by a number of persons, where he was soon convinced of the truth and propriety of the representations, which had been made to him—and agreed that upon the desire of the inhabitants being publickly expressed, he would conduct himself accordingly. Some small rudeness being offered to the Captain afterwards in the street, by some boys, several gentlemen interposed, and suppressed it before he received the least injury. Upon an hour's notice, on Monday morning, a public meeting was called, and the State-House not being sufficient to hold the numbers assembled, they adjourned into the square.

Monday Morning, December 27, 1773.

THE TEA-SHIP being arrived, every Inhabitant, who wiſhes to preſerve the Liberty of America, is deſired to meet at the STATE-HOUSE, This Morning, preciſely at TEN o'Clock, to adviſe what is beſt to be done on this alarming Criſis.

"This meeting is allowed by all to be the most respectable, both in numbers and rank of those who attended it, that has been known in this city. After a short introduction, the following resolutions were not only agreed to, but the public approbation testified in the warmest manner.

"1. RESOLVED, That the TEA, on board the ship Polly, Capt. Ayres, shall not be landed.

"2. That Capt. Ayres shall neither enter nor report his vessel at the Custom-House.

"3. That Capt. Ayres shall carry back the Tea immediately.

"4. That Capt. Ayres shall immediately send a pilot on board his vessel, with orders to take charge of her, and proceed to Reedy-Island next high water.

"5. That the Captain shall be allowed to stay in town till tomorrow, to provide necessaries for his voyage.

"6. That he shall then be obliged to leave the town and proceed to his vessel, and make the best of his way out of our river and bay.

"7. That a Committee of four gentlemen be appointed to see these resolves carried into execution.

"The Assembly were then informed of the spirit and resolution of New-York, Charles-Town, South Carolina, and the conduct of the people of Boston, whereupon it was unanimously resolved,

"That this assembly highly approve of the conduct and spirit of the people of New-York, Charles-Town, and Boston, and return their hearty thanks to the people of Boston for their resolution in destroying the Tea rather than suffering it to be landed.

" The whole business was conducted with a decorum and order worthy the importance of the cause. Capt. Ayres being present at this meeting, solemnly and publicly engaged, that he would literally comply with the sense of the city, as expressed in the above resolutions.

" A proper supply of necessaries and fresh provisions being then procured, in about two hours, the Tea-ship weighed anchor from Gloucester Point, where she lay within sight of the town, and has proceeded with her whole cargo, on her return to the East-India Company.

" The public think the conduct of those gentlemen, whose goods are returned aboard the Tea-ship, ought not to pass unnoticed, as they have upon this occasion generously sacrificed their private interest to the public good.

" Thus this important affair in which there has been so glorious an exertion of public virtue and spirit, has been brought to a happy issue; by which the force of the law so obstinately persisted in to the prejudice of the national commerce, for the sake of the principle on which it is founded (a right of taxing the Americans without their consent), has been effectually broken,—and the foundations of American liberty more deeply laid than ever."

In another part of the same paper the following is given:

" The ground which was covered by the people on Monday last, in the State House square being measured, it was calculated by two different persons, unknown to each other, that there were near 8000 people collected there, and many hundreds who were on the way were disappointed reaching the place of meeting before the business was over, owing to the short notice that was given. On Tuesday last, at three-quarters of an hour after two o'clock, Capt. *Ayres*, of the TEA-SHIP Polly, with Mr. Barclay, late one of the Consignees, left Arch Street Wharf, on board a pilot boat (having been 46 hours in town), to follow the ship to Reedy Island, and from thence transport the East India Company's adventure to its OLD ROTTING PLACE, in Leaden Hall Street, *London*. They were attended to the wharf by a concourse of people who wished them a good voyage."